HOSEA 11

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB (MT VERSING)
God Yearns Over His People	God's Continuing Love for Israel	Israel has rejected the LORD and must undergo punishment that will bring loss of king, children, places of worship, and country (9:1-11:12)	God's Love for His Rebellious People	God's Love Despised: His Vengeance
11:1-4 (1-4)	11:1-4 (1-2)	11:1-7 (1-4)	11:1-4 (1-4)	11:1-6 (1-4)
	(3-4)			(5-6)
11:5-7 (5-7)	11:5-7 (5-7)	(5-7)	11:5-9	God's Love Stronger than His Vengeance
				11:7-9 (7-9)
11:8-11 (8-11)	11:8-11 (8-9)	11:8-9 (8-9)	(8-9)	The Return From Exile
	(10-11)	11:10-11 (10-11)	11:10-11	11:10-11 (10-11)
	God's Anger with Judah's Sin		Israel and Judah are Condemned	
11:12	11:12-12:14 (12)	11:12-12:1 (11:12-12:1)	11:12-12:6	11:12

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy

Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 11:1-4

[1]When Israel *was* a youth I loved him,
And out of Egypt I called My son.
[2]The more they called them,
The more they went from them;
They kept sacrificing to the Baals
And burning incense to idols.
[3]Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them in My arms;
But they did not know that I healed them.
[4]I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love,
And I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws;
And I bent down *and* fed them.

11:1-4 Hosea is characterized by its fresh and varied metaphors to describe God and His actions. Two of the most powerful and personal metaphors are

1. God as faithful lover, chapters 1-3
2. God as loving parent (male and female), chapter 11

God has revealed himself to fallen humanity by choosing things that humans have experienced—deeply personal and powerfully moving things—and has said, "I am like that to you." This is why family metaphors and analogies are used so often in the Bible in relation to God. All humans have experienced the deep feelings of human love and many have experienced parenthood. Through these experiences God has clearly revealed himself and the depth of His love and loyalty (cf. Hos. 11:8-9).

11:1 "When Israel *was* a youth I loved him" This is very similar in emphasis to Hos. 9:10 and 10:1. It focuses on YHWH's love and choice of the descendants of Abraham (cf. Deut. 4:32-40) in Egypt to uniquely be His people (cf. Amos 3:2, which reflects Exod. 19:5-6), which was a prophetic fulfillment of Gen. 15:12-21.

God chose a man to choose a family to choose a nation to represent Him to the world (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). Out of this family would come the Messiah (i.e., typological use of this text in Matt. 2:15 in the life of Jesus).

▣ **"And out of Egypt I called My son"** The term "son" in the singular in the OT can refer to

1. the nation of Israel (e.g., 1:10; Exod. 4:22)
2. the King of Israel (e.g., 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7)
3. the Messiah (e.g., Ps. 2:7, quoted in Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5)

This reference is used of Jesus as a child being taken to Egypt to protect Him from Herod in Matt. 2:15, however, in this context it refers to the nation of Israel. Notice the emphasis on election, "I called" (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* PERFECT). In the OT election is primarily for service

(Israel's place in YHWH's redemptive plan), while in the NT it is primarily for salvation (cf. Eph. 1:3-14).

SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHERHOOD OF GOD

SPECIAL TOPIC: "SONS OF. . ."

11:2 "they called them" This refers to the prophets (cf. LXX translation and 2 Kgs. 17:13-18; Isa. 6:10; Jer. 7:25-26). However, Israel acted just like human teenagers. The more God called them (the Septuagint and the Syriac have "God" instead of "they"), the more they did just the opposite (cf. Hos. 11:7b).

David A. Hubbard, Hosea (Tyndale OT Commentaries), re-divides line 2 and thinks that "they" refers to tempters like the "Ba'al of Peor fertility-worshiping women of Num. 25. The lines would become "the more they called them, The more they went from me" (p. 187). The Jerome Biblical Commentary asserts "they" refers to all the local Ba'al altars (p. 262). To a wayward son, bent on self and sin, the call of idolatry was louder and stronger than the call of a loving parent (i.e., Prodigal Son of Luke 15).

Whichever theory is true the settled wayward character is emphasized! Her past commitments are lost in her current desires.

▣ **"Ba'al"** This refers to the male Canaanite fertility god. For a full discussion of the Canaanite pantheon see *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, by William Foxwell Albright.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FERTILITY WORSHIP OF THE ANE

▣ **"They kept sacrificing to the Baals, And burning incense to idols"** These two lines of poetry are parallel. Nothing is known of animal sacrifices to Ba'al, therefore, the sacrifices (BDB 256, KB 261, *Piel* IMPERFECT) may refer to offering incense (BDB 882, KB 1094, *Piel* IMPERFECT).

There was some sacrificing of children to Molech, the fertility fire god. This may be referred to in Hosea in some of the passages about the slaughter of children.

11:3 "it was I who taught Ephraim to walk" This is a rare VERB form (BDB 920, KB 1183, *Tiphel*) with an unusual meaning for the root ("foot"). Verses 3 and 4 show the love of God expressed in the metaphor or analogy of YHWH as a loving parent, both father and mother (emendation of Hos. 11:4b,c). The father either

1. went before His child to walk
2. went before His child in example and/or protection

SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHERHOOD OF GOD

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN LANGUAGE

▣ **"But they did not know that I healed them"** Can you feel the pain of YHWH in this phrase? His own people, who He saved out of Egypt and uniquely revealed Himself to, were attributing His love gifts to them as coming from the Canaanite fertility gods! Wounded love!

The VERB "healed" (BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal* PERFECT) is often used for God forgiving sin, as seen in Hosea 5:13, 6:1; 7:1; Exod. 15:26; the parallelism of Ps. 163:3; and Isa. 1:5-6, examples of national sin described in terms of a physical disease (also note Isa. 53:5 and 1 Pet. 2:24-25).

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEALING

11:4 "with cords of a man, with bonds of love" This refers "to a child-training leash." God's discipline is as much a sign of His love as any of His mercy actions (cf. Heb. 12:5-13). Loving parental discipline is the key to understanding God's actions and guidelines to sinful mankind, who

are in the process of destroying themselves in the freedom and knowledge of the tree of good and evil. He will not let us go unchallenged! He will not stand by and let us destroy ourselves.

▣ **"as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws"** The Hebrew term "yoke" (BDB 760) seems out of place in this context (however, it could refer to Hos. 10:11). Yet, by changing a vowel and doubling the last consonant, it is possible to insert the Hebrew term "infant" (BDB 760, cf. Hos. 14:1), which seems to fit the context of parental care much better (cf, NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 401). A possible translation would be like the NEB, NAB, JB, NJB, "as one who lifts an infant to his cheek." This is possibly a reference to YHWH as a nursing mother.

God is not a male or female. He is an eternal, personal, spirit present throughout time, space, and all dimensions of reality. He created male and female as a means of reproduction on this planet. He incorporates the best of both in Himself.

There are several places where this femininity is specific.

1. Gen. 1:2, "brooded over the waters" – this is a female bird word
2. Hosea 1:4; Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13 – God as a nursing mother

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 11:5-7

[5]They will not return to the land of Egypt;
But Assyria—he will be their king
Because they refused to return *to Me*.
[6]The sword will whirl against their cities,
And will demolish their gate bars
And consume *them* because of their counsels.
[7]So My people are bent on turning from Me.
Though they call them to *the One* on high,
None at all exalts *Him*.

11:5 "They will not return to the land of Egypt" This is a seeming contradiction to Hos. 7:16; 8:13; 9:3. There are two possible theories of interpretation:

1. Egypt is a symbol for slavery
2. Egypt is another example of political alliances

Theory 2 seems to fit the context of chapter 11:5 best, however, theory 1 seems to fit the context of the other references better.

It is possible to translate "not" as "surely," this would solve the seeming contradiction (cf. RSV, NEB).

▣ **"But Assyria—he will be their king"** This is a clear prophecy of the Assyrian exile (cf. Hos. 7:11; 8:9-10; 9:3; 10:6). It is possible that the verse refers to rejecting Israel's trust in political alliances with both Egypt and Assyria. Assyria as king may reflect 10:3. Israel wanted a king like the nations (cf. 1 Sam. 8:5); now they had one!

▣ **"they refused to return *to Me*"** The term "return" (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is the OT term for repentance.

The pain of God's heart can be seen in the VERB "refused" (BDB 549, KB 540, *Piel* PERFECT). It was not ignorance on Israel's part for which they were culpable, but open-eyed rebellion against YHWH and His law (cf. Hos. 7:13-15; 8:1,12).

SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE (OT)

11:6 "The sword will whirl against their cities" The VERB (BDB 296, KB 297, *Qal* PERFECT with *waw*) is used of dancing, the turbulence of storms, or writhing in the pain of childbirth. Here it is the flashing, whirling action of a personified sword as it devastates the cities of Israel.

▣ **"gate bars"** This term (BDB 94) refers to

1. the wooden beams used to secure city gates at night (Israel was trusting in her fortifications, cf. Hos. 8:14; 10:14)
2. to divination (cf. Isa. 44:25; Jer. 50:36) and as parallel to "counsel"

▣ **"because of their counsels"** This could refer to

1. the policies of Jeroboam I, who set up the golden calves
2. the ongoing policies of the different dynasties who succeeded him
3. the decision of political advisors. This is referred to several times in Hosea (e.g., Hos. 7:12)

11:7 "So My people are bent on turning from Me" The VERB (BDB 1067, KB 1736, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE), which is used literally in Deut. 28:66, "to hang something before someone," here is a metaphor for a tendency or natural leaning toward someone/something (but not YHWH).

The term "turning from" (BDB 1000) means to "turn back" or "apostatize" (cf. Hos. 14:5; in Jer. 3:6 of Israel; in Jer. 2:18; 3:22; 5:6; 8:5; 14:7 of Judah, often translated "faithless"). Instead of turning to God in repentance they turned away from Him in apostasy!

The opening "My people" is an allusion to Hos. 1:9 (i.e., "Lo-Ammi"), but with the future hope of the full hope of Hos. 2:23 (i.e., Ruhamah, cf. Hos. 1:6 and Ammi)!

▣

NASB	**"they call them to *the One* on high"**
NKJV, NRSV	**"they call on the Most High"**
NJB	**"if they are summoned to come up"**
REB	**"they call in unison to Ba'al"**
JPSOA	**"When it is summoned upward"**
Peshitta	**"they shall call to God"**
NET	**"they call to Ba'al"**

The MT has "upwards they call it altogether." The question is, who does line b refer to and who does line c refer to? I think

1. line b refers to Ba'al
2. line c refers to
   a. YHWH (NASB, NKJV, Peshitta)
   b. Ba'al (REB, NET)

Several ancient Greek translations, the Aramaic Targums and the Latin Vulgate, take the word "upward" (BDB 752) as "yoke" (BDB 760).

1. upwards – על
2. yoke – על (cf. v. 4)

"They will cry out because of the yoke that is on them, but no one will lift it" (TEV).

▣ **"None at all exalts *Him*"** This is the problem of fallen mankind, especially the covenant people (e.g., Isa. 53:6 a,b, quoted in the NT by Peter in 1 Pet. 2:25).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 11:8-11

[8]How can I give you up, O Ephraim?

How can I surrender you, O Israel?

How can I make you like Admah?

How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
My heart is turned over within Me,
All My compassions are kindled.
9I will not execute My fierce anger;
I will not destroy Ephraim again.
For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst,
And I will not come in wrath.
10They will walk after the LORD,
He will roar like a lion; Indeed He will roar
And His sons will come trembling from the west.
11They will come trembling like birds from Egypt
And like doves from the land of Assyria;
And I will settle them in their houses, declares the LORD.

11:8 "How can I give you up" The heart of YHWH is breaking (cf. third set of parallel lines in this verse, cf. Hos. 6:4) as His rebellious child turns away from a loyal loving parent. In the OT a child like this could be stoned to death (cf. Deut. 21:18-21). How or where do justice and love meet?

▣ **"How can I surrender you"** This VERB (BDB 171, KB 545, *Piel* IMPERFECT) means "to deliver up" or "give over." This word is used only three times in the OT and only in Gen. 14:20 with a similar meaning.

▣ **"Admah. . .Zeboiim"** These are cities of the Plain were identified and destroyed for their wickedness along with Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Gen. 10:19; 19:24-25; Deut. 29:23). They no longer existed; God must judge Israel, but not to extinction.

▣ **"My heart is turned over within Me"** This VERB (BDB 245, KB 253, *Niphal* PERFECT) is the general word for "to turn" or "overturn." It is used to describe God's overthrow of the cities of the Plain (alluded to in the previous two parallel lines of Hos. 11:8) in Gen. 19:21,25,29; Deut. 29:22. It is not that God has changed His anger toward Israel's sin and rebellion, but that His love and mercy will provide a future salvation. This is the essence of the new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38, which is based on the character of God, the work of the Messiah, and the wooing of the Spirit, not human performance of an external code. God has changed His ways of dealing with fallen humanity (cf. a second possible meaning of the VERB, TEV, NIV, NET Bible).

▣ **"All My compassions are kindled"** This term for "compassions" (BDB 637) is used in only three places in the OT, Isa. 57:18; Zech. 1:13; and here. The VERB "kindled" (BDB 485, KB 481, *Niphal* PERFECT) means "to grow warm or tender," and was originally used of heating fruit in the ground to ripen it (e.g., Gen. 43:30; 1 Kgs 3:26; and here).

11:9 "I will not execute My fierce anger" The CONSTRUCT "fierce anger" (BDB 354 and 60) is also found in Hos. 8:5 (e.g., Exod. 32:12 at the golden calf of Aaron; Num. 25:4 at Israel's idolatry at Shittim; Num. 32:13-15 at Israel's lack of faith about entering the Promised Land; Josh. 7:26 at Achan's sin at Ai; Deut. 13:17 at idolatry of a city and many more).

▣ **"I will not destroy Ephraim again"** God chooses to have mercy (cf. Jer. 26:3). But this does not mean that they were not punished (cf. Hos. 11:10a; Jer. 30:11).

▣ **"For I am God"** This is the name *El* (BDB 42 II). See SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY, A.

▣ **"not man"** This should go without saying (cf. Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Job 9:32), but in our day the physicalness of God is asserted as the model of "image and likeness" in Gen. 1:26-27. God is spirit! God is holy (this context is the only place in Hosea that this characteristic is attributed to YHWH, cf. Hos. 11:12).

▣ **"the Holy One in your midst"** This (BDB 899, 872) is similar in meaning to the term, "Immanuel" which means "God with us" (BDB 769, cf Isa. 6:12; Isa. 7:14). The Bible begins with God and humans in a garden (cf. Genesis 1-2) together and ends with God and humans in a garden together (cf. Revelation 21-22). The essence of biblical faith is God and His highest creation in fellowship, not only spiritually but physically. Humans were created for fellowship with God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). There was never meant to be a transcendent and immanent distinction. Only human sin caused the need!

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HOLY ONE

▣

NASB	**"And I will not come in wrath"**
NKJV	**"And I will not come in terror"**
NRSV (footnote), LXX	**"I will not enter the city"**
TEV, NJB	**"I will not come to you in anger"**
REB	**"I shall not come with threats"**
JPSOA	**"I will not come in fury"**
Peshitta	**"I will not come to attack the city"**

This ambiguous Hebrew phrase can be understood in several ways depending on the Hebrew root:

1. "to burn" or "to consume" (BDB 128)
2. "to remove" or "to destroy" (BDB 128)
3. "with" plus "agitation" or "wrath" (BDB 786)
4. MT, "and I will not enter the city" (VERB BDB 97, KB 112; OBJECT, *Qal* IMPERFECT and the BDB 746 II), which would link it to Hos. 8:14; 10:14, YHWH's presence demanded judgment

11:10 "He will roar like a lion" "Roar" here does not refer to an act of violence on the part of a wild animal, but a parent calling her little ones home.

SPECIAL TOPIC: LIONS IN THE OT

▣ **"And His sons will come trembling from the west"** There may be a word sound play between YHWH's "fierce anger" (BDB 354) and "they will come trembling" (BDB 353, KB 350, *Qal* IMPERFECT, used twice, cf. Hos. 10:11). This term is used

1. in Gen. 42:28 at fear over an act of God
2. in 1 Sam. 10:4 at fearful respect of God's prophet
3. in 1 Sam. 21:1 as fear in the presence of King David

The ADJECTIVE is used of awe and reverence at God's word in Isa. 66:2; Ezra 9:4; 10:3.

The direction of the coming "west" (literally "the sea") is surprising since Assyria is to the east. Some scholars see Hos. 11:10 and 11 as a return from three directions (i.e., from everywhere, cf. Isa. 11:11-12).

1. the islands and coast land at Palestine, Hos. 11:10
2. Egypt, Hos. 11:11

3. Assyria, Hos. 11:11

11:11 "They will come. . .from Egypt. . .from the land of Assyria" Many Jews fled Egypt during the Babylonian invasion and exile. God will bring His people home!

▣ **"I will settle them in their houses"** This is a reference to one of the promises of God mentioned in the cursing and blessing section of Deuteronomy 27 and 28.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 11:12

[12]Ephraim surrounds Me with lies
And the house of Israel with deceit;
Judah is also unruly against God,
Even against the Holy One who is faithful.

11:12 The Massoretic Text lists verse 12 with chapter 12. Context confirms this! The last phrase of verse 12 is one of the central passages of the entire book (cf. Hos. 6:6; 8:7). It emphasizes God's faithfulness and Israel's faithlessness. This is the tension between an unconditional (God's character) and conditional covenant (human obedience).

▣ **"Ephraim surrounds Me with lies"** The VERB (BDB 685, KB 738, *Qal* PERFECT) was used earlier in Hos. 7:2, where Israel's evil deeds surround them.

Israel's lies could be (cf. Hos. 7:13)

1. covenant violations (broken promises)
2. political counsel (foreign alliances, 7:3)
3. religious divination (idol-priests)
4. false prophets (prosperity and security)
5. false information about YHWH

▣

NASB	**"Judah is also unruly against God"**
NKJV, NRSV	**"Judah still walks with God"**
TEV	**"the people of Judah are still rebelling against me"**
NJB	**"(But Judah still is on God's side)"**

The Hebrew is ambiguous. The question remains, "Are the last two poetic lines in parallel or in contrast?" Is Judah contrasted with a sinful Israel (JPSOA) or are Judah and Israel contrasted with a faithful Holy God (cf. Hos. 12:2)?

Some scholars see the VERB as "wander" or "roam" (BDB 923, e.g., *Hiphil*, PERFECT, Gen. 27:40; *Qal*, Jer. 2:31); others see it as (BDB 921, *Qal* PERFECT, Isa. 14:2; Ezek. 34:4; *Hiphil* PERFECT, Isa. 41:2).

▣ **"the Holy One who is faithful"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Define and explain OT election.
2. Why is God described as a husband and a parent?
3. Why are political alliances condemned in all the OT prophets?

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